

## Public Health Dental Hygienist (PHDH)

In January 2009, Governor Patrick signed into law the "public health dental hygienist", a new category of dental professional, to provide preventive dental services in a public health setting. Public health dental hygienists do not work under the supervision of a dentist, but must enter into a collaborative agreement with a dentist to establish a means of communication/guidance to maintain the public's health and safety.

Dental hygienists who meet the qualifications outlined in the law, as well as in the regulations promulgated by the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Dentistry may provide preventive dental services in settings such as schools, long-term nursing facilities, clinics, medical facilities, hospitals, and shelters without the supervision of a dentist.

Public health dental hygienists may also be directly reimbursed by MassHealth and Commonwealth Care, the state's subsidized health insurances.

To assist professionals in understanding the public health dental hygienist the Department released an e-toolkit.

The PHDH e-toolkit may be accessed at [www.mass.gov/hcworkforcecenter](http://www.mass.gov/hcworkforcecenter) search under "Office of Oral Health"



Visit Massachusetts Health Care Workforce Center at [www.mass.gov/hcworkforcecenter](http://www.mass.gov/hcworkforcecenter)

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Dental Workforce Initiatives  
and  
Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program (MSLRP)  
for Dental Professionals



[www.mass.gov/dph/hcworkforcecenter](http://www.mass.gov/dph/hcworkforcecenter)





## Workforce Center

The mission of the Massachusetts Health Care Workforce Center (HCWC) is to improve access to health care in the Commonwealth by supporting policy making and programs which will assure optimal supply and distribution of primary care and other health professionals, including dentists and dental hygienists.

## Importance of Dental Workforce

It has long been established that oral health is a vital component of overall health. With this in mind, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Office of Oral Health works in conjunction with other programs, as well as other offices, agencies and institutions, as part of the Division of Primary Care and Health Access to increase access to oral health services for all residents in the state, especially vulnerable population groups. The Office engages in oral health surveillance, including the dental workforce, surveying dentists and dental hygienists annually during their license renewal.

A number of areas in Massachusetts meet the criteria of federal shortage designations in regards to dental services. To help attract and retain dental professionals to Massachusetts, the state offers a loan repayment program for dentists and hygienists. This includes funding for public health dental hygienists and dentists in prescribed public health settings.

## Loan Repayment Program For Dental Professionals

The Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program for Dental Professionals was established to assist dental health professionals to provide services to the state's most vulnerable residents. This is accomplished by helping those who wish to practice in these areas repay students' loans accrued during their professional education.

1. National Health Service Corps (NHSC)
2. Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program (MSLRP)

### Maximum Award

1. **NHSC** - \$50,000 for Dentists, \$50,000 for Dental Hygienists
2. **MSLRP** - \$50,000 for Dentists, \$40,000 for Dental Hygienists

### Service Obligation

1. **NHSC** - 40 hour work week, site must be located in a DHPSA\*
2. **MSLRP** - Must work full-time in a Community Health Center within a DHPSA\*

\* DHPSA- Dental Health Professional Shortage Area

"If I had the opportunity to tell someone about my experience, I would say that this has honestly been one of the most rewarding times in my life. I love the patients I see everyday and I love the group of people that I work with."

"This program offers excellent reimbursement for serving in underserved communities and it is not hectic when it comes to paperwork. While in this program, you not only get the satisfaction of helping people, you also get your loans paid."

## Is This Program A Good Fit For You?

1. Are you someone who cares about others?
2. Are you someone that is worried about your educational debt?
3. Are you someone who is interested in treating the most vulnerable patients?
4. Are you someone who is up for a challenge?
5. Are you someone who wants to be an excellent clinician?
6. Are you someone who is driven?
7. Are you someone who is ready for variety?

If you answered **YES** to the majority of these questions then you have found yourself a great opportunity!

Find out more information  
[www.mass.gov/dph/hcworkforcecenter](http://www.mass.gov/dph/hcworkforcecenter)

"I would definitely recommend this program to any future dentist or dental hygienist. I feel as though you gain great knowledge working in a community health center. The patients you see from day to day are different, with a vast array of dental issues and problems."